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ABSTRACT

Many people appear to suffer from social anxiety. To explore how socially anxious people function in a number of domains, Watson and Friend's (1969) Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) was administered to 101 undergraduate students. Subjects also completed the California Personality Inventory (CPI) and the Psychosocial Support Inventory (PSI). Seventy-eight subjects also provided height and weight data about themselves and rated themselves on perceived attractiveness and perceived weight status. The data were analyzed using an 83 x 83 matrix that included scores on the SAD, the 18 CPI measures, and 48 PSI categories; biographical data; and available height, weight, and attractiveness data. An analysis was also done using only the information from the top 25 and the bottom 25 SAD scorers. Of these 50 subjects, 38 had provided height, weight, and attractiveness information. The results revealed that SAD scores were significantly correlated in a negative direction with 13 of the 18 CPI scales. Evidence for social support showed that people with high SAD scores also had poor support networks. SAD scores were also correlated with perceptions of being overweight. These findings support previous research suggesting that socially anxious persons have deficits in a variety of personal and interpersonal domains. (NB)

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SOCIAL AVOIDANCE AND DISTRESS, THE CPI AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

To see how socially anxious people function in a number of domains, Watson and Friend's (1969) Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) was administered to 100 undergraduates along with the California Personality Inventory (CPI) and the Psychosocial Support Inventory (PSI). SAD scores were significantly correlated in a negative direction with 13 of the 18 CPI scales. Evidence for social support showed that people with high SAD scores also had poorer support networks. Additionally, SAD scores were correlated with perceptions of being overweight. The present results agree with previous research (e.g., Dow, Biglan & Glaser, 1985) suggesting that socially anxious persons possess deficits in a variety of personal and interpersonal domains.

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INTRODUCTION

Many people in our culture suffer from social anxiety. Watson and Friend's (1969) Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) has been used extensively in research on the nature of persons who possess this relatively common problem. To gain a greater understanding of how socially anxious persons function, this study focused on the relationship between SAD scores and the 18 scales of Gough's (1956) California Personality Inventory (CPI), Plas & Wallston's (1983) Psychosocial Support Inventory (PSI) and an individual's perceptions about his/her appearance. The CPI measures a variety of personality traits that are generally divided into 4 clusters. The first cluster, including 6 scales (Do, CS, Sy, Sp, Sa and Wb), is described as measuring social poise, assurance and self-confidence, and interpersonal adequacy. The second cluster, which also includes 6 scales (Re, So, Sc, Ro, Gi and Cm), is said to reflect socialization, maturity, responsibility and intrapersonal values. The third cluster has 3 scales comprising it (Ac, Ai and Ie), which tap intellectual functioning. The fourth cluster includes 3 scales (Py, Fx and Fe) and it reflects intellectual and interest modes. The PSI provides information

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about whether various individuals (i.e., family, friends, boy/girlfriends) provide various types of social support (i.e., material aid, intimate interaction, positive social interaction and/or guidance) to an individual.

METHOD

A total of 101 (68 male and 33 female) undergraduate general psychology student volunteers completed the SAD, CPI and PSI. Subjects also provided personal information about themselves. Additionally, 78 of the 101 furnished height and weight data about themselves and also rated themselves on perceived attractiveness and perceived weight status. Subjects' actual height and weight information was compared with the "Metropolitan Life Insurance Chart " listings for medium builds in order to determine their actual weight status.

The data were analyzed using an 83 x 83 matrix that included the subjects' scores on SAD, the 18 CPI measures, 48 PSI categories (Material, Intimate, Social Activities and Guidance networks), biographical data, and the available height and weight and attractiveness data. An analysis was also done using only the information from the top 25 and bottom 25 SAD scorers. Of these 50 subjects, 38 had provided weight and height information and attractiveness and weight ratings of themselves.

RESULTS

Using the data for all subjects, significant ($p < .05$) negative correlations were found between SAD scores and 13 of the CPI scales and 7 of the PSI categories (see Table 1). Also a significant correlation was found between SAD scores and perception of being overweight.

Analysis of the data on the top 25 and bottom 25 SAD scores revealed a similar pattern of significant negative correlations: SAD scores were signifiantly ($p < .05$) correlated with 11 CPI scales, 6 PSI categories and the subject's perception of whether or not they were overweight (see Table 1).

DISCUSSION

As expected, SAD scores were negatively related to the majority of the CPI measures. Furthermore, significant relationships were found with respect to all clusters of the CPI, including all of the scales in the first cluster and two-thirds of the scales in Clusters II and III. These results agrees with Geis & Hamrick (1983) who found the SAD to be negatively correlated with self-confidence and need for affiliation and dominance.

The social support networks that were found to be significantly related to SAD scores were all in the negative direction. Moreover, all but one of these correlations were with regard to either the Intimate or Social Activities networks. In general, these results agree with those reported by Jones and Carpenter (1986) who reported that persons suffering from shyness (a quality similar to social avoidance and distress) have fewer intimate and social relationship networks.

Comparing the findings for all 101 vs only the top and bottom 25 subjects showed the same pattern of results. There were 2 more correlations using all subjects but a stronger relationship (i.e., higher Pearson r values) for the comparisons using only the highest and lowest scoring subjects. The results on the PSI measures were also similar. However, the comparisons with the high and low subjects revealed the presence of significant correlations with regard to boy/girlfriend social supports suggesting that these latter subjects may also have possessed a heterosocial anxiety problem.

It is interesting that perception of being overweight was related to SAD scores whereas actually being overweight was not significantly related to social anxiety. Additionally, perceived attractiveness was not related to SAD scores. In a somewhat similar finding, Jones, Briggs & Smith (1986) found that shyness was not correlated significantly with physical attractiveness as rated by observers.

In conclusion, the present results offer support to the notion that the problem of social anxiety includes deficits in a variety areas, including personal and interpersonal functioning, social support networks and accuracy of self-perceptions. These results support Dow et. al's (1985) conclusion that the "breadth of the social competence construct should not

be underestimated."

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Table 1: Significant Pearson r correlations of SAD With Other Measures

	All Subjects	Top & Bottom 25 Subjects
CPI		
Dominance	-.59***	-.67***
Capacity for Status	-.45***	-.54***
Sociability	-.69***	-.74***
Social Presence	-.53***	-.64***
Self-Acceptance	-.54***	-.57***
Well-Being	-.34***	-.46***
Responsibility	-.20*	
Tolerance	-.45***	-.51***
Good Impression	-.27**	-.39***
Communality	-.21*	-.28*
Achievement by Conformity	-.29**	-.33*
Intellectual Efficiency	-.34***	-.38**
Psychological Mindedness	-.25*	
PSI		
General Intimate	-.30**	-.34*
Recent Intimate	-.37***	-.48***
General Activity	-.32**	-.37**
Recent Activity	-.41***	-.57***
Recent Guidance	-.21*	
Friends Intimate	-.26**	
Friends Activity	-.22*	
Boy/Girlfriend Intimate		-.33*
Boy/Girlfriend Activity		-.34*
Perceived Overweight	-.22*	-.38*

*p< .01 **p < .01 ***p< .001